The College Radio Coalition:

in unity there is strength

by Brian Gomez

The College Radio Coalition? Hmmm... The name has that idealistic ring of those consumer activist groups that were so prevalent in the news 10 years ago. Although the attitude of devotion to a special cause may seem a bit archaic in today's atmosphere of grit-your-teeth-and-bear-it realism, the College Radio Coalition has brought that old spirit to a thoroughly modern crusade.

The CRC is spearheaded by 13 students (full-time and part-time) from five Greater Cleveland area universities. (And if there's one place where idealism and belief in special causes still thrives today, it's at the universities.) The roll call of the non-profit CRC organization is as follows: Debbie Barkey and John Basalla (Baldwin-Wallace College), Pennie Stasik, Bob Hisnay and Mark Edwards (Cleveland State University), Brian Blum and Ron Wolfe (Oberlin College), Ann Weatherhead, Larry Collins, Lars Harper and Bob Harris (Case Western Reserve University), and Mary Cipriani and John Iammarino (John Carroll University). SCENE recently sat down with several of these individuals to discuss the Coalition.

These people are involved on behalf of their colleges' radio stations: WBWC-88.3FM (B.W.C.), WCSB-89.3FM (C.S.U.), WOBC-91.5FM (O.C.), WRUW-91.1FM (C.W.R.U.), and WUJC-88.7FM (J.C.U.). Although it's not a CRC member, be aware that Akron University's WAUP-88.1FM exists to serve the Akron area.

All right. Now that attendance has been taken and you've been given the appropriate reference materials, let's get into our subject, the CRC. Or as Steve Martin might say, "What in the hayull is that? I don't know..."

Perhaps you have heard of the CRC. They helped promote the November Gary Numan concert at the Cleveland Agora. They held a benefit concert at the Pop Shop featuring three original-music local bands, and they recently brought the New York avant-garde jazz outfit Red Decade to town for a concert.

The CRC has quietly gotten their act together during the course of 1982. Their initial formation came as a result of an Agora promotional event that took place in early March.

"It all started last January," Cipriani recalls, "when the

"In the long-range category, we'll try and get more coordination among the station program directors," notes Harper. "Hopefully there won't be so much duplication of genres of music on at the same time. Also, a goal is to co-produce some shows in the public affairs area."

The CRC is shooting for some results in these areas during 1983. This past year saw the Coalition starting to get on its feet. They cite the rigid programming of radio in general as their major impetus for forming.

> "We felt that if we all worked together, we could accomplish some things that we couldn't do individually. As a group we have more resources than we do as five individual stations."
>
> — Ann Weatherhead, WRUW

"If it weren't for the commercial stations today," comments Weatherhead, "we certainly wouldn't exist as a coalition. There wouldn't be the need."

"We obviously don't have to research ourselves to death prior to programming a given piece of music," offers Basalla. "We don't have to play the ratings game."

Non-commercial (meaning they air no commercials) college radio seeks to fill the voids created by the commercial stations' quest for massive appeal. At one point in time, different commercial stations aimed to please specific segments of the audience, according to specific *Common Denominator*. Rather than totally satisfying a mere segment of the potential audience, they instead try **not to offend** anyone, just like television tries to do. This creates bland, opinionless radio that few people love, most people like and, most importantly, few people hate.

Yet there now is a minority of people who do hate all commercial radio, because most air personalities do not show any of their true feelings about what they play. Think

Record companies and record marketers, like Side One have one goal in mind: selling records. That's why they're beginning to direct more records, attention and resources toward college radio stations across the country. They now realize where most of the active listeners are. The people who are willing to take a chance on buying a new record or attending a concert by a new artist are tuned in to college radio.

The area college stations have turned to their listeners for financial support, via benefit concerts. With the Reagan Administration continually cutting government aid to educational institutions, college radio will need your continuing support to stay on the air. Even though they are non-commercial, they still have to pay for things like equipment and parts. Thus, fund-raising is an important factor to college radio's health.

The Coalition has also encouraged its member stations to actively help each other out. WCSB's Bob Hisnay gives one pertinent example of this. "Just recently, the WRUW engineers helped WCSB out with the going stereo process," he says. "There was some trouble with it, and they were nice enough to come over and help our engineer out."

Other ways in which the CRC can further their collective cause are now being planned. They will have a contest in January to design a logo, which will be used in ads for Coalition-sponsored concerts. They are also considering a joint program guide somewhere down the road.

CRC chairperson Pennie Stasik offers some basic goals for 1983. "During this next year," she explains, "we'd like to take a step in the right direction toward having our programming coordinated. Getting less duplication of music at the same time. We're also working for a much wider awareness and interest in college radio in the Cleveland area. Plus we want to develop the live music capacity here for different music."

So the College Radio Coalition has some definite goals which they're already working on behind the scenes. Leave it to WRUW's outspoken Lars Harper to pointedly sum up the thrust of CRC's collective efforts.

"Eventually," he intones in his own humorously histrionic style, "the goal for our listeners would be to achieve self-actualization at less than 92 Megahertz."

University). SCENE recently sat down with several of these individuals to discuss the Coalition.

These people are involved on behalf of their colleges' radio stations: WBWC-88.3FM (B.W.C.), WCSB-89.3FM (C.S.U.), WOBC-91.5FM (O.C.), WRUW-91.1FM (C.W.R.U.), and WUJC-88.7FM (J.C.U.). Although it's not a CRC member, be aware that Akron University's WAUP-88.1FM exists to serve the Akron area.

All right. Now that attendance has been taken and you've been given the appropriate reference materials, let's get into our subject, the CRC. Or as Steve Martin might say, "What in the hayull is that? I don't know..."

Perhaps you have heard of the CRC. They helped promote the November Gary Numan concert at the Cleveland Agora. They held a benefit concert at the Pop Shop featuring three original-music local bands, and they recently brought the New York avant-garde jazz outfit Red Decade to town for a concert.

The CRC has quietly gotten their act together during the course of 1982. Their initial formation came as a result of an Agora promotional event that took place in early March.

"It all started last January," Cipriani recalls, "when the Agora was planning their 'Battle of the College D.J.'s.' Several of us met at the 2300 Club before going over to the Agora. That was when a lot of us first met each other and started talking. A lot of questions just started snowballing."

"It eventually came out that we all had a lot of interests in common," adds Weatherhead. "We felt that if we all worked together, we could accomplish some things that we couldn't do individually. As a group we have more resources than we do as five individual stations."

Those resources encompass their collective promotional, programming and public service abilities. The primary goal is to promote alternative programs that listeners in this community don't get from the commercial stations.

"As non-commercial radio stations, we are basically service organizations," Basalla observes. "And we can probably provide better service to the community by cooperating and working together."

One way that the CRC intends to service college radio listeners is by bringing some of the little-known progressive musicians that they air into town for shows. "We'd like to build up enough of a bankroll from benefits to be able to take some risks and bring alternative music shows to Cleveland," says Weatherhead, "especially bringing those that wouldn't come here otherwise."

Just as these college stations try hard not to duplicate the types of music that commercial stations already play, the CRC is trying to cut down on the instances where two or more of these stations are playing the same musical style at the same time. For instance, on many weeknights several of these stations play jazz from 10p.m. to midnight. In addition, the 50,000-watt WKSU-FM from Kent also airs jazz every night from 7p.m. to 6a.m., but none during the day. This duplication problem is the subject of a longer-range goal of the CRC.

"If it weren't for the commercial stations today," comments Weatherhead, "we certainly wouldn't exist as a coalition. There wouldn't be the need."

"We obviously don't have to research ourselves to death prior to programming a given piece of music," offers Basalla. "We don't have to play the ratings game."

Non-commercial (meaning they air no commercials) college radio seeks to fill the voids created by the commercial stations' quest for massive appeal. At one point in time, different commercial stations aimed to please specific segments of the audience, according to specific *Common Denominator*. Rather than totally satisfying a mere segment of the potential audience, they instead try **not to offend** anyone, just like television tries to do. This creates bland, opinionless radio that few people love, most people like and, most importantly, few people hate.

Yet there now is a minority of people who do hate all commercial radio, because most air personalities do not show any of their true feelings about what they play. Think about it. Can you picture the 32-year-old rock jock going home after work and cranking up the Loverboy album that he seems so enthusiastic about while on the air?

Granted, there are some believable, unique personalities, like a Kid Leo or a Len Cannon, but they are the exception and not the rule. The jocks on college radio are unpaid, opinionated and honest. As a consequence, they attract the listeners who take the most active interest in music. WUJC's John Iammarino relates a story that drive this point home.

"I had a guy call me up with some information about an album I hadn't heard about," he recounts. "I told him to bring it up to the station, and I'd put it on. So he brought up about 30 albums and said, 'If you wanna borrow 'em, here.' He just handed me about 30 albums. It **was** real unusual. But I was real accessible to him and gave him some information over the phone, so he came up. You couldn't do that, bring an album to a commercial station, because they wouldn't play it."

Because of these musically active and motivated listeners, college radio is also attracting record company interest. "We're hearing more from record companies now," observes Collins. "They're really pushing the newer artists, at least at our end. Like if they send us a new Rolling Stones record or Pat Benatar or something like that, they won't bother following it up. But if they send us something new like a Bill Nelson record, that's different. We've even got Side One Marketing calling us now."

process," he says. "There was some trouble with it, and they were nice enough to come over and help our engineer out."

Other ways in which the CRC can further their collective cause are now being planned. They will have a contest in January to design a logo, which will be used in ads for Coalition-sponsored concerts. They are also considering a joint program guide somewhere down the road.

CRC chairperson Pennie Stasik offers some basic goals for 1983. "During this next year," she explains, "we'd like to take a step in the right direction toward having our programming coordinated. Getting less duplication of music at the same time. We're also working for a much wider awareness and interest in college radio in the Cleveland area. Plus we want to develop the live music capacity here for different music."

So the College Radio Coalition has some definite goals which they're already working on behind the scenes. Leave it to WRUW's outspoken Lars Harper to pointedly sum up the thrust of CRC's collective efforts.

"Eventually," he intones in his own humorously histrionic style, "the goal for our listeners would be to achieve self-actualization at less than 92 Megahertz."